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A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC radio stations, Wednesday, January 22, 1936.

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Hello folks: One glance at my overflowing mail basket these days is enough to convince me that a lot of you folks are already getting your plans made and all ready to start your gardens just as soon as the weather permits. In case I am a little slow in answering your inquiries please be patient for I am getting to your letters just as fast as possible. Incidentally I wish you could all see the variety of questions that are coming to us these days.

Here is a very common question. "Please send me information on how to grow frost-proof cabbage plants." The so-called "frost-proof" cabbage plants are simply plants of the regular early cabbage varieties that are grown in Georgia and other Southern States right out in the open and as a result are pretty well hardened to frost. Somebody started the name "frost-proof" to distinguish these plants from those that are grown in greenhouses, hotbeds, cloth covered beds and where the plants have been protected from frost and are less hardy. There is danger of overdoing the hardening or frost-proofing of cabbage plants especially if the plants have attained considerable size because the continued exposure to cold will often cause the plants to bolt to seed instead of forming heads.

Celery plants are almost certain to bolt to seed prematurely in case the young plants are subjected to continued temperatures below 50 degrees. Both cabbage and celery are biennials, that is, under normal conditions the plants have to be grown to a marketable stage one season then be stored or otherwise protected over winter and they will produce their seed the second season. How it happens that a period of two or three weeks of cold during the plant-growing period will often serve the same function as wintering-over, and, when you set the plants in the garden or the field they grow for a while then suddenly throw up seed stalks and produce seed, and seed is not what you are after.

The remedy is to grow your plants under cover and keep them reasonably warm, that is above 50 degrees at night and 65 to 70 degrees during the day. You may have heard gardeners talking about "hardening" plants before time to set them outdoors. It is very easy to overdo the hardening process but the growth can be somewhat checked by holding off a trifle on the watering toward the end of the plant-growing period. The market gardeners of the Northeastern States have found small greenhouses and heated sash-covered beds a big advantage in getting their plants under way for spring planting. Another advantage, they can work in their greenhouses, sowing seeds and transplanting the little plants, on days when the weather is too bad for working outdoors.

We are still getting numerous letters about growing horseradish for the market. In reply we are sending a little mimeograph circular that tells how horseradish is grown and how prepared for the market, but I want to warn you that about all of the horseradish that can be sold to advantage is now being grown, so don't rush into the horseradish business without knowing how and where you are going to dispose of your product after you grow it.

(over)

The girasol, commonly known as Jerusalem artichoke, looks like a small sunflower but has a lot of grubby little tubers like warty potatoes at its roots, is another crop that is causing us a lot of worry these days. The tubers of the Jerusalem artichoke contain a special kind of sugar known as levulose, but there are no factories making levulose sugar from artichokes and so there is very little market for the tubers. The Jerusalem artichoke can be grown almost anywhere from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico wherever it is planted on rich land and the crop is used to some extent as human food, for making delicious mustard pickles, and lastly but not leastly as a food for hogs. So don't get excited about planting girasols even though as the name indicates they do turn their heads with the sun.

Now please don't get the idea that we are not glad to get your letters and to give you all possible information but there are a number of questions like the moon and freak methods of growing crops that we feel should give way to more important questions. During the weeks that are to follow I am going to give you some of the high lights on methods of producing fruits and vegetables, and your questions are always welcome.